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PROJECTS CONDUCTED IN A SAMPLING OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS HAVE PROVIDED A POSITIVE ANSWER TO THE CONCERNS OF MANY COMMUNITIES OVER THE VALUE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS (FLES). THE RESEARCH PROVED THAT (1) EVEN THOUGH TIME HAD BEEN TAKEN FROM OTHER SUBJECTS, AVERAGE FLES PUPILS GENERALLY PERFORMED AS WELL AS OR BETTER THAN NON-FLES PUPILS, (2) FLES STUDENTS, ENTERING HIGH SCHOOL LANGUAGE CLASSES AT A HIGHER LEVEL THAN OTHERS, PERFORMED BETTER IN ALL SUBJECTS, (3) SUPERIOR STUDENTS WHO RECEIVED SUPPLEMENTARY FLES INSTRUCTION AFTER SCHOOL HOURS BEHAVED IN A MORE MATURE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL MANNER THAN THE NON-FLES SUPERIOR STUDENTS, AND (4) FLES PUPILS TENDED TO HAVE POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PEOPLE WHOSE LANGUAGE THEY WERE STUDYING. THIS ARTICLE IS A REPRINT FROM "HISPANIA," VOLUME 48, NUMBER 3, SEPTEMBER 1965 AND IS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM THE MATERIALS CENTER, MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION, NEW YORK, NEW YORK. (GJ)

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WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF FLES

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Despite the growing number of elementary school children enrolled in foreign language programs, despite federal financial assistance and public encouragement of such programs, and despite the inception of legislation making such programs of instruction mandatory in certain states, there remains considerable concern over the effects of adding a second language to the curriculum of a monolingual elementary school.**

Research reported during the past three years, however, concludes that this concern is unnecessary at the present time. The effects of FLES are positive in response to four significant queries.

First, what effect does the addition of FLES have upon achievement in basic subject areas in the elementary school? One experiment reported in 1963 took place in two public schools in metropolitan New York.[1] Here the introduction of daily fifteen-minute FLES lessons for one year had no adverse effect on achievement in the prescribed curriculum. The groups were equated in grade placement, age intelligence, and socio-economic status, and received the Stanford Achievement Test both at the beginning and at the end of the experimental period. A total of 114 third graders participated. The groups studying a foreign language evidenced greater mean achievement *gain* in seven out of eight instances, and while in the eighth instance, the non-FLES control group evidenced a slight gain over the experimental group, this was not statistically significant.

Another and longer experiment was conducted by the public schools of St. Paul, Minnesota from 1960-63 to determine whether FLES can be added without adversely affecting achievement in other subject areas and without lengthening the school day.[2] Their experiment involved 4611 pupils in grades four, five, and six.

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Six schools were selected for the control group whose pupils did not learn Spanish but were otherwise quite closely comparable to the pupils in the experimental group. All classes in this group followed the time allotments suggested by the district for their particular grade levels in specific subjects.

Six schools were selected for the experimental group which studied Spanish by telecasts developed under the direction of the Minnesota Council for School Television. All classes in this group spent fifteen minutes a day, five days a week, on FLES; and this time had to be deleted from the times normally allotted to social studies or language or arithmetic. (Other subjects, except reading, lacked sufficiently large weekly time allotments under the existing school day to permit deletion for FLES, and reading itself was considered too vital an area upon which to encroach.) For the experimental group at each grade level the one subject area from which time was to be deleted for FLES was randomly selected, but all classes for each grade in any one school had to follow suit. No grade was allowed to reduce several areas by a few minutes each, and teachers were carefully instructed not to attempt to make up time in subject areas from which time for FLES was deleted.

The standardized measuring instruments used to evaluate results were the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, the Stanford Social Studies Test, and the Otis Beta Intelligence Test. Again, the deletion of time from arithmetic, language, and social studies to devote to the study of Spanish had no detrimental effect upon measured achievement in the subject areas from which time was taken.

The St. Paul findings agree with another study in the teaching of Spanish reported in 1963 by the public schools of Champaign, Illinois.[3] The duration of this experiment was shorter—one year; the size of the sample was smaller—180 pupils, but the time allotment for FLES was longer—100 minutes a week—and had to be obtained by reducing slightly each of the daily instructional periods in social studies, arithmetic, and language arts. Both the FLES or experimental group and the non-FLES or control group had school days of similar length. Nevertheless, the FLES pupils carefully equated with non-FLES pupils showed no significant loss in achievement in other subjects as measured by the standardized Iowa Test of Basic Skills. In fact, the FLES group showed greater achievement in reading vocabulary (plus .001 difference in mean gain) and reading comprehension (plus .052 difference in mean gain) than did the non-FLES pupils. In language skills, work study skills, and arithmetic the experimental and control groups varied little.

Second, what effect does the addition of FLES to the elementary curriculum have upon later achievement in high school? One answer may be found in the investigation completed in 1962 by the public schools of Somerville, New Jersey which have operated a FLES program continuously since 1949.[4] Somerville pupils study either Spanish or French for six years beginning in grade three and continuing through grade eight. (The language a child pursues is purely an accident of birth with Spanish and French alternating each year; but once the child has begun his work in either language, he studies that same language daily during his remaining years in elementary school.) When he and his fellow-FLES-mates reach the Somerville Senior High School, however, they meet tuition pupils from outlying areas who enroll without any FLES background.

Should the FLES graduates elect to continue the study of their language in high school, they are assigned to an Enriched Language Pattern (ELP) group which enables them in the tenth grade to join third level high school language classes. This advantage places them in college level courses in their senior year or allows them to study an extra subject. In the meantime high school students who begin their language work in the ninth grade continue in the tenth grade at the second level in a Traditional Language Pattern (TLP) group.

For purposes of this investigation careful evaluation was made of 1530 FLES and non-FLES graduates of the classes of

1957-61. It was found that pupils in the ELP group achieved grades that were approximately 10% higher than did the TLP pupils of similar ability even though the ELP pupils were a year younger; these grades were made in any foreign language class, new or continued. It was found too that the difference between the mean of the former FLES pupils and the mean of the former non-FLES pupils in grade point average (covering marks in *all* courses taken throughout the four years of high school) was less than 0.1%.

Finally, there was no deleterious effect from the FLES program on the retention of pupils in the high school foreign language program whether these pupils were college preparatory students or not. Among non-college preparatory students, 70% of the FLES graduates elected some foreign language study during their four years in high school compared to 62% of the non-FLES graduates who elected a foreign language. The difference is significant at 13 to 1 odds (90% level of significance). These figures (70% and 62%) must be contrasted with state and national percentages of all pupils then enrolled in foreign language work to indicate community awareness of language study values: 48.2% (New Jersey) and 27.0% (United States).

Third, what effect does the addition of FLES have on superior or gifted students? A three-year study reported in 1963 by the Salt Lake City School District attempted to challenge superior students in the elementary grades by teaching them a foreign language after school.[5] (In this instance, a student was rated as "superior" if he had a minimum I.Q. of 115 as measured by the Pintner-Durost General Ability Test.) Some 600 students in more than fifteen elementary schools participated, beginning in grades four and five and continuing for three years. The FLES lessons lasted one hour, three times weekly.

Did the superior students in the project who enrolled in the FLES course perform at a higher academic level than superior students who were not so enrolled? Yes, the FLES group which was observed from the fourth grade through the sixth grade performed better in science and social studies than did superior students who were not studying a foreign language. The FLES group which was observed from the fifth grade through the seventh grade outperformed the non-FLES group of superior students in arithmetic and spelling.

Did the superior or gifted students taking a foreign language behave better in their homeroom than superior students who were not enrolled in FLES? Yes, they displayed more emotional control, more leadership, more self-initiated drive across the three years than did the non-FLES group of superior students. According to homeroom teachers who twice during each year filled out a behavior check list for each student involved in the study, the superior students enrolled in FLES behaved throughout the three years in what could be defined as a more mature manner in their socio-emotional components than did the non-FLES superior students.

Fourth, what effect does the addition of FLES have on the attitudes of elementary school pupils toward foreign-speaking peoples? One answer may be found in a report issued last autumn (1964) by the University of Illinois of an experiment involving fifth grade pupils.[6] The control group was constituted of sixty-three children from five classrooms who had not studied Spanish while the experimental group included sixty-three pupils who had had twenty-minute daily lessons in Spanish language and Hispanic culture for two years. These FLES pupils also came from five classrooms three of which were taught by specialists while two used television and tapes guided by the regular classroom teacher. To equate at least partially the factor of teacher personality the televised programs and tapes seen by two classrooms were made by the same specialists that taught the other three classrooms. Otherwise, the pupils in both groups resembled each other in characteristics which it was believed might affect attitude formation: school experience, socio-economic status, chronological age, sex, and intelligence.

Both groups were administered an eight-page questionnaire especially devised by university professors to determine attitudes.

In order to avoid having the fifth graders associate the test with foreign language teaching, however, the instrument was entitled "A Social Studies Questionnaire", and was administered during the social studies period by a person with no foreign traces in his manner, speech, or appearance. The questionnaire dealt with foreign cultures which were represented by a number of languages besides Spanish, for the countries discussed were Russia, Spain, Germany, Mexico, France, Argentina, and Bolivia. The last part of the questionnaire asked each pupil to select the foreign-speaking child (Russian, Spanish, French, or German) that he would like most to have as a friend, and then explain in writing why he would prefer that child to the other three listed.

This experiment concluded that FLES pupils had significantly more positive attitudes toward the Spanish-speaking peoples they had studied than did the non-FLES group. (They also had more positive attitudes toward the Spanish-speaking peoples which they had *not* studied, though to a lesser degree.) A further breakdown revealed that in comparing the two FLES approaches, the group using specially prepared television and tapes tended to have more positive attitudes toward Spanish-speaking people than did the group which received instruction from specialists.

Finally, regardless of instructional method, FLES pupils did *not* generalize their positive attitudes toward Spanish-speaking peoples to other foreign-speaking peoples; indeed, non-FLES pupils experienced more positive attitudes than their FLES-mates toward foreign-speaking peoples other than Spanish-speaking ones.

Briefly then, teaching a foreign language to elementary school children in its cultural setting is a potential force in creating more positive attitudes toward the peoples represented by that language and newer educational media through specially designed programs may prove more effective than personal contact with classroom teachers in establishing particular attitudes.

To summarize, the effects of foreign language instruction to younger children are numerous, relating to both elementary and high school achievement, relating to both average and superior students, relating to both scholarship and attitude. Research tells us these effects of FLES are positive.

[1] Esther W. Lopato, "FLES and Academic Achievement," *The French Review*, XXXVI (April, 1963), pp. 499-506.
[2] Walter B. Leino. *The Teaching of Spanish in the Elementary Schools and the Effect on Achievement in Other Selected Subject Areas.* U.S. Office of Education Contract SAE 9515. St. Paul: Public Schools, November 1963.
[3] Charles E. Johnson, Joseph S. Flores, and Fred P. Ellison, "The Effect of Foreign Language Instruction on Basic Learning in Elementary Schools," *The Modern Language Journal*, XLVII (January, 1963), pp. 8-11.
[4] Joseph H. Vollmer. *Evaluation of the Effect of Foreign Language Study in the Elementary School upon Achievement in the High School.* U.S. Office of Education Contract SAE 9516. Somerville: Public Schools, July 1962.
[5] Oakley J. Gordon, Keith M. Engar, and Donald R. Shupe. *Challenging the Superior Student by Making the Study of Russian Available in the Elementary School Curriculum Via Television.* U.S. Office of Education Grant No. 7-54-0050-024. Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1963.
[6] M. A. Riestra and C. E. Johnson, "Changes in Attitudes of Elementary School Pupils Toward Foreign Speaking Peoples Resulting from the Study of a Foreign Language," *Journal of Experimental Education*, XXXIII (Fall, 1964), pp. 65-72.

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